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TALKS BY THREE

VII.—PARLIAMENT SQUARE AND THE IMPROVEMENTS.

The First—An Artist.
The Other—An Architect.
The Third—A Millionaire.

THEY were in a club smoking-room, and were talking about the Finest Street in Europe.

‘One is a bit sick of that expression,’ the First had said; ‘the papers do it to death. And, as a matter of fact, that word “finest” is most misleading. In the first place it is indefinite, for what do you mean exactly by *fine*?’

‘I think it is all right,’ the Other had answered; ‘by fine one means grand, imposing, splendid.’

‘Well, if that’s what you do mean,’ the First rejoined, ‘the expression is most misleading, for it is not half so fine as half-a-dozen others I could name.’

‘Oh, nonsense,’ said the Other, ‘you haven’t seen all the other streets in Europe.’

‘No; but I have seen a good many of them,’ said the First.

‘Well, let’s hear what you *do* call a fine street,’ asked the Other. ‘Have they got one in Paris, for instance?’

‘No, I do not consider that they have as a street. They have many fine corners, squares, open spaces, and individual buildings, of course. Perhaps the view of the Louvre taken in conjunction with the Seine down to Notre Dame, is fine, but certainly the Grand Canal, Venice, the Nevski Prospekt in Petersburg, and the great Stockholm highway by the Salt Sjöen are fine.’

‘Well,’ asked the Other, ‘and why does not our Parliament Street come into the same category?’

‘Because it does not fall within your definition. It is neither grand, nor imposing, nor splendid. It is only beautiful.’

‘Well, that is enough, surely,’ said the Other.

‘It may be *enough*,’ said the First, ‘but it is not *fine*. How you do miss the point.’

‘It seems to me,’ said the Other, ‘that your distinctions are a bit “fine.” I really do not see how you can draw the line.’

‘Not at all,’ said the First. ‘The only thing fine about it is the actual width of the road. Its

great charm it owes to quite other qualities; and chiefly to the fact that it makes a picture. It is in this respect like the High Street, Oxford; like that beautiful road, it has a curve, and as you look down its length from opposite the Admiralty, the picturesque features come just into the right place, as at Oxford, just where an artist would put them in a composition. In one case it is St. Mary’s Spire and All Souls, in the other it is the Banqueting Hall and a group of trees and some red roofs; while before the clearance the King Street group of houses made a charming bit of distance.’

‘Do you approve of the alteration?’ asked the Other.

‘I regret the spoiling of the picture, but the gain from a nearer point of view is immense, of course.’

‘I like the plans for the new Government buildings,’ said the Other, ‘I think the compensation for height has been cleverly contrived, and the arcading by which it is proposed to join the Education block with the present buildings.’

‘Yes the arcading is all right in itself,’ the First rejoined, ‘but you architects all have a way of looking at a thing simply as an “elevation,” as you call it. You don’t sufficiently consider it from the point of view of the general picture. Here is an excellent example. By putting this arcading you bring the front of the building into a flat line and remove all chance of picturesque irregularity. It so happens there is an admirable opportunity here if the authorities had an eye for the beautiful. If you look up Parliament Street from the corner of the Square, you will see that Gilbert Scott made a separate abutment (that is not the word, but you know what I mean) at the corner of his building. It is ornamented with figures. Now it is obvious, surely, that this should be left clear and that the front of the new buildings should not come farther out than, say, the inner wall—the King Street wall—of the hoarding. So that in looking up the Street the eye should be met with a line broken by this corner of the present buildings. Then in front of the new buildings they might put some grass

AIDS TO AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS

and flowers. I suppose they will never do it, because they will protest that the ground is worth a guinea an inch, or something equally contemptible.

'Well, at any rate, I wish they would put a spire on the Abbey,' said the Other. 'I was delighted to see the *Daily Mail* set the idea going.'

'Ah, now if you could get *that* scheme afloat you would be doing something,' said the First.

'Well I have gone into the question very thoroughly,' said the Other, 'but we will not talk about it now. Let us wait till we have a quiet evening. Of course it will cost a pile of money.'

The Third who had been blinking at the fire all this time without uttering a word now rose to go. 'I should like to hear what you have got to say about it,' he remarked. 'Get your leave, settle your plans, and then come to me.'

Vox.

AIDS TO AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS

DURING the past month careful amateurs have been preparing for the spring light to secure negatives. It is well known that the month of May is generally *the* month for those who use snapshot cameras. The light is at the strongest, and care should be exercised or over-exposure will be the result.

As many of our readers are just beginning to try a camera, it may be mentioned that by looking over the back numbers of this journal some hints will be found given to those who have no knowledge of photography. Since those were printed there have been several improvements in apparatus and materials. The Kodak Company have made the Cartridge Kodak (No. 4) a very good instrument for the money, and the films are better. A new printing out paper (Cross Swords brand) has appeared which promises to be better than any on the market, and it is to be hoped that the makers will keep the quality up to the sample tried. Sichels' self-toning paper is good for those who wish to get sepia tones with little trouble. The Platinotype Company still occupy the first place for excellence in their beautiful paper, which appeals to all who desire truly artistic effects.

Of course it must be clearly understood that to obtain a good print a good negative must be secured, and the glass plate has not yet been superseded. Those who must of necessity confine their attempts to the hand camera, and who can afford it, should buy the No. 2 Binocular, which can be had with several improvements and 'Zeiss' lens for a very reasonable figure. The

camera is for plates and is not recommended for films, and as there are several patterns, the one with the indicator at the base of the camera is the best. The maker's guarantee should also be enquired for. These cameras can now be had in London at the same prices as those charged in Paris, which have always been below those asked in London.

Presuming that a good lens is used, now is the time to make negatives for use hereafter. Several negatives have been sent in plainly showing that the worker has been very impatient and has taken the negatives out of the developer too soon, the result being under-development. This applies chiefly to Paget plates and the excellent formula given by the Paget Company. This particular brand when developed with Eikonogen will bear prolonged development without fogging, and though appearing almost black when held to the lamp, will clear wonderfully when placed in the Hyposulphite of Soda to fix. In the case of under-exposure, care should be taken to cover the plate, even in a room properly lighted, and to keep the dish in motion all the time the negative is under treatment, or stains will result. Another important point is to be quite sure the negative is properly fixed, in many cases indeed twenty minutes will not be too long for the plate to be kept in the Hypo.

This reminds the writer of a case in which an amateur found that all his negatives were defective, and the fault was ultimately traced to his dark-room lamp. It was a cheap and worth-